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ABSTRACT

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School was the first off-reservation boarding school and began the social experiment of assimilation of Native Americans into American culture. For almost 40 years, from 1879 to 1918, the school sought to civilize "savage" Indian children. Richard H. Pratt, founder of the school, believed that the school was the solution to the "Indian problem." To successfully carry out the mission to assimilate and rehabilitate, Pratt believed that the school must "Kill the Indian, save the man." To achieve this goal, totalitarian methods were employed, and all aspects of life were controlled. All traces of Indian culture were removed from the view and memory of students. Students were given new Anglo names, and they were forbidden to speak their native language. Boys' hair was cut in the Anglo fashion, and Indian dress was replaced with military uniforms. Girls were given Victorian-style uniform dresses and shoes. During summers, students were placed with Anglo families instead of returning home. Students spent half the day at scholastic study, primarily learning English, and the other half pursuing vocational training. By total immersion in Anglo-American culture, students internalized the belief that Whites were culturally superior. Pratt believed that the goal of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, to assimilate and rehabilitate Indian students, was successful. However, in retrospect, the U.S. government's goal of eradicating Native American cultures failed miserably. (TD)

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The Carlisle Indian Industrial School

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Abstract

The Carlisle Indian Industrial School was the first off-reservation boarding school and began the social experiment of assimilation of Native Americans into American culture. For almost 40 years, from 1879 to 1918, the school sought to civilize 'savage' Indian children. Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, believed that the school was the solution to the "Indian Problem". To successfully carry out the mission to assimilate and rehabilitate, Pratt believed that the school must, "Kill the Indian, save the man." This paper will examine the formation of the school and the educational ideologies under which the school operated.

Introduction

For almost 40 years, from 1879 to 1918, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School sought to civilize 'savage' Indian children. The United States Government viewed Native Americans as a people who had to be assimilated and rehabilitated (Landis, 1996). Richard H. Pratt, founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, believed that the school's totalitarian methodologies were the solution to the 'Indian Problem'. To successfully carry out the mission to assimilate and rehabilitate, Pratt believed that the school must, "Kill the Indian, save the man." This paper will explore the background of the times in which the Indian School Movement occurred and discuss the educational ideologies that guided the founding and operation of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School.

Background of the Indian School Movement

At the end of the American Civil War, Indian Tribes were blocking the way of white settlement in the West, so U.S. troops were sent to control the Tribes and keep them within the boundaries of their reservations. Since Indians were nomadic hunters, puzzled by the unfamiliar concept of private property, this was a difficult task for the U.S. soldiers (Odyssey, 2002). A senator from Massachusetts, Henry Dawes, fully discounted the Indian belief of community property. Dawes believed, "...selfishness was the root of civilization" and, "The separate farm is the door to civilization" (Odyssey, 2002). To promulgate his beliefs amongst Native American Tribes, Dawes sought ways to assimilate Indians into the American culture of individual, land-owning farmers. He accomplished this by authoring The Dawes Act, which when passed by Congress in 1887, broke up communal Indian land. The stated purpose of the Act was

to protect Indian property rights during the Oklahoma land rush by giving each Indian family 160 acres of land with a 25-year tax-free trust (Ethnic Cleansing, 1993). While on the surface this appeared to benefit Indians, in reality leftover lands were sold to mining, railroad and cattle companies (Odyssey, 2002). As stated by Senator Henry M Tiller, "...the real aim of [The Dawes Act] is to get the Indians' land and open it up for settlement" (Ethnic Cleansing, 1993). The Dawes Act failed the Indian people because most could not make the transition from hunter to agricultural farming. Although the government gave Indians title to land for farming, they also, "failed to provide training, equipment, seeds, hoes, or ploughs" (Odyssey, 2002).

Formation of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School

Richard H. Pratt, the founder of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, was a Union Calvary officer, who served in the west after the Civil War. He was assigned to work closely with Native Americans and African Americans when he commanded Buffalo Soldiers and Indian Scouts in Oklahoma. It was during this time that he became aware of the injustices to both African and Native Americans under his command (U.S. Army, 1991).

In 1875, Pratt was ordered to escort 72 Indian prisoners from Fort Sill, Oklahoma to Fort Marion, Florida where he became their warden (Baldwin, 1992). It was during this time that he developed an interest in educating Indians and believed that he could transform the 'savages' in his care into model citizens. Pratt took an unusual approach toward the Indians serving time under his supervision, he "...removed their chains, gave them responsibilities and put them to work" (Trennert, 270). In time, many of the

Indian prisoners found jobs in nearby St. Augustine and were taught to read English by local women.

When the U.S. government decided to return the prisoners to their reservations, Pratt convinced the Indian Office to allow him to keep 17 of the younger prisoners so that he could begin an off reservation Indian boarding school. With the approval of his request, Pratt's prisoners became his students and his role changed from prison warden to school superintendent.

Pratt began his social experiment with the 17 Indians from Fort Marion at the all-black school, Hampton Institute, in Virginia. It was there that he began formulating his belief that, "...the best answer to the age-old Indian problem lay in education" (Fear-Segal, 327). However, Pratt soon felt that the existing prejudice toward African Americans would adversely affect the Native American students, and consequently his social experiment, if the two groups were linked in the minds of U.S. citizens (Trennert, 1983). Therefore in 1879, believing that the Indians needed a school of their own, he petitioned the Secretary of the Interior, who authorized the opening of a boarding school at Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, the site of a closed military post. That the Secretary of the Interior was receptive to Pratt's request was amazing in that it occurred only "...a few years [after] Custer and the Seventh Cavalry had been wiped out by the combined forces of the Sioux and Cheyenne" (Fear-Segal, 325).

The primary goal of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, "...was to indoctrinate Indian children in Anglo-American ways; to eradicate native tribal cultures, ...[and] rapid Indian assimilation" (Fear-Segal, 323). Pratt believed that to successfully acculturate Native American students, they had to first be deculturated and then formed into

imitations of the majority of citizens during that time period, white, Christian farmers (Landis, 1996). Everything Pratt planned for the Carlisle Indian Industrial School had the purpose of guiding the Indian students "...step by step up the evolutionary ladder, from hunter to herder to farmer" (Fear-Segal, 330). To meet this goal, Pratt believed that Indian children must be removed from their homes, families and tribes and taught to act, think and behave as Anglo-Americans. Removal of children from their Indian culture would accelerate the liberation from 'heathen' ways (Odyssey, 2002). "Indian children must be taken away from the reservation, away from old ways and from the influence of family and tribe in order to be successfully absorbed into the white culture" (Witmer, 11).

Richard Pratt may have had altruistic goals when he put his plans into action at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School however, "The United States government had its own reason to attempt this method of social engineering. Breaking rebellious Indians by indoctrinating their children in Anglo ways was considered a cost-effective alternative to war..." (Vanderpool, 2002). The Indian School Movement became a money-saving endeavor, "...because It cost anywhere from six to ten thousand [dollars] for the Army to kill an Indian...But if Indian children were put in schools and forced to change into Americans, it would only cost a couple of hundred dollars per child" (Vanderpool, 2002).

Pratt was always appealing to the Indian Bureau and financial supporters to raise sufficient operating funds. "The initial expenses of the first lean years were financed through a 'Civilization Fund' which was money accumulated from the sale of Osage Indian lands in Kansas. It wasn't until 1882 that Congress made the first appropriation

for the school" (Witmer, 1993). Quakers assisted Pratt financially; the Society of Friends displayed an interest in the welfare and advancement of the Native American students and contributed money and equipment to the school. (Toussey, 1939)

Life at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School

"The Carlisle Indian Industrial School was the first federal off-reservation boarding school for Native Americans...Over 8,000 students representing 139 tribes attended the school during its 39 years of operation" (U.S. Army, 2). The school was established to give Indian children training in industrial arts and a general education in English. In addition, a farm and vocational shops were kept as holdings of the institution (War Dept, 1915).

To recruit students for the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, Pratt was directed to visit two important Sioux Chiefs, Spotted Tail and Red Cloud, to enlist children from their Tribes. Pratt did not inform these Chiefs that the children would be hostages, "...to ensure that their parents would not continue armed resistance against the United States Army" (U.S. National Library, 1998), but convinced the Chiefs of the benefit that would come to the Tribe if their children became proficient in English. He made these statements even though, according to Fear-Segal, he later discouraged students from returning to their reservations (1999). Spotted Tail and Red Cloud gave their permission for 82 Sioux children to be transported to Carlisle, Pennsylvania from Dakota Territory. During the train trip to Carlisle, "Pratt...telegraphed Chicago of a stop over [of the 82 Indian students] and newspapers publicized the journey. As they pulled into [train] stations along the way, crowds of curious people peered into the trains, anxious for a look at these 'wild' children" (Landis, 1996). Even upon arrival at their

destination in Carlisle, the Indian children were met by crowds and were followed to their new home at Carlisle Barracks. The children continued to be viewed as curiosities and crowds disrupted the operation of the school so much so, that visitors to the school had to be limited to Saturdays (Toussey, 1939)

At its founding, the staff and administration of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was comprised only of Anglo-Americans. Pratt believed that this would ensure the maximum amount of Anglo-American influence on his students which would hasten the students' acculturation (Toussey, 1939). The school endeavored to immediately remove all traces of Indian culture from the memory and view of the students. Upon arrival at the school, the boys' hair was cut in 'Anglo fashion' and Indian dress was replaced with military uniforms and shoes; girls were given Victorian-style uniform dresses and shoes (Witmer, 1993). To publicize the dramatic, visible change in the students and the success of his experiment, pictures of students in their native dress were taken upon their arrival at the school and then again a few weeks later, after their hair was cut and uniforms and shoes were issued (Toussey, 1939). Some of these photographs were used as propaganda tools; although they were simply before and after photographs which showed physical changes, Pratt believed that they emphasized his programs' effectiveness at rehabilitating Indians (Vanderpool, 2002). Photographs of students in native dress or involved in school activities were sold for 10 cents each and were distributed to promote the school (Witmer, 1993).

Another dramatic and traumatic change that occurred soon after arrival of the students at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, was that the students chose new names. Students were lead to a room where Anglo names were written on the

blackboard and were told to choose a name from the board. Students did so, without knowing the meaning or pronunciation of any of the names (Smith, 2002). "In taking away the linguistic Indian name – which had been a source of strength, cultural pride and psychic identity- and making the "new" names very common, written [and] when used again and again, they in effect erased all spiritual aspects of the children's identities" (Smith, 2002).

Students were organized into companies in military fashion and daily formations, inspections, marches and drills were held. Student officers were held accountable for the appearance and behavior of the members of their companies (U.S. Army, 1991). All reference to the students' Indian culture was barred and students were forbidden from speaking in their native languages (Fear-Segal, 1999). This was difficult since many students did not speak English prior to coming to Carlisle. To ensure adherence to this rule each student had to respond 'Indian' or 'no Indian' at evening roll call to declare whether they had spoken in their native Indian language that day. Students who had spoken Indian during the day were reported to the Superintendent's office where, "...special efforts were made to correct the difficulty" (Toussey, 1939).

The Carlisle Indian Industrial school was primarily a vocational training school, which taught English proficiency. Students spent half of each day at scholastic study and the other half pursuing vocational training. "The manual labor and farming programmes thus served a pedagogical purpose and also supplied shoes, clothes, bread, cereals, fruit and vegetables as well as meat for the table" (Fear-Segal, 1999). Indian students needed these skills so that they could learn new ways to support their families, since the ability to hunt was not considered a viable option for a vocation.

Female students were taught domestic arts such as dressmaking, sewing, laundering, cooking, child care and nursing, while male students were taught trades such as shoemaking, tinsmithing, carpentry, blacksmithing, wagonmaking and, telegraphy (U.S. Army, 1991). Farming, construction and building maintenance at the school were the responsibility of the students, with students being responsible for the erection of many of the school's buildings (Toussey, 1939). In fact, many of the buildings in use at Carlisle Barracks today were constructed by Indian students.

Students had a choice of many extra-curricular activities from which to choose. Students could participate in the band, numerous athletic teams, debate societies, student publications and artwork (Witmer, 1993). "Pratt wanted to bring Indians into direct competition with Americans and show they could win. This was his major motivation for creating the famous Carlisle football team" (Fear-Segal, 333). "The [football] team played most of their games away from Carlisle...[and] although members of the team missed quite a good many days away from their classes, it was felt that traveling about and meeting so many young white men would be of real civilizing value to the Indian students (Toussey, 1939). This is another example of Pratt's belief that assimilation was the only way that Indians could be acculturated into Anglo-American society and that any exposure to Anglo-Americans was positive.

The Outing Program

Pratt believed that to fully integrate and assimilate Indians into the Anglo-American culture, they must live, "in intimate contact with 'civilized' American society" (Trennert, 267). He believed that this would be accomplished by placing students with host families so that the students could experience the daily life of a typical Anglo-

American family. This process was called the Outing System and, "...offered students the opportunity to experience American culture through participating in daily family life with host families" (U.S. Army, 5). Enrollment in the Outing Program meant that instead of returning to visit their families over the summer months, students were placed as employees in Anglo-American homes (Landis, 1996). This program helped further the "...assimilationist goals of the federal government.... [whose] basic objective was to obliterate communal habits, promote individualism and prepare the native population for immediate contact with the white world" (Trennert, 269). "Each boy and girl was paid for his or her services while on the Outing and this money was deposited in an interest-bearing account by the school, and was turned over to the student when he or she left...the school" (Toussey, 1939). At least half of Carlisle's students participated in the outing program (Witmer, 1993).

Both students and sponsors were required to sign an agreement that acknowledged the rules of the Outing program. Some of those rules included: Mandatory attendance at Church and Sabbath School; Use of tobacco or liquor was prohibited; Pupils had to bathe at least once per week; and Monthly reports were to be completed by the hosting family. In addition, students were not permitted to return to school without prior permission from the school administration (Outing Rules, 1900). Participating in the Outing System further separated students from family, Tribal life, customs and other support upon which they had depended on at the Indian school, which caused further isolation.

Many of the books and articles written about the Carlisle Indian Industrial School during the time of its operation or shortly after its closure romanticize the institution, the

work it did and the student's attitudes towards the experience. Some observations noted during research were: Children as young as 4 years old were enrolled in the school (Witmer, 1993), and there were 1,758 documented runaways, many of which died of exposure (Smith, 2002). Although the Carlisle Indian School's student newspapers contained many editorials and articles concerning student life, Pratt was editor of school publications, so how much, if any, freedom of expression the students had is not known.

Discussion of Educational Ideologies

As did many men of his time, Pratt believed that the Indian culture should be obliterated and the Indians assimilated into Anglo-American society. "Pratt...was highly critical of reservations and encouraged his pupils not to return. This was unrealistic, but quite consistent with his hostility to any form of Indian segregation (Fear-Segal, 1999). The Carlisle Indian Industrial School was celebrated for civilizing Indians, however, this was done without a real understanding of Native American beliefs, culture or what Tribal life meant or encompassed physically and spiritually. "Within 5 years the Carlisle school had transformed hundreds of young men from potential savage warriors to self-respecting, potential American citizens and as many young women from squaws of the teepees to efficient housewives" (Toussey, 1939). The prevalent belief of the times was that there was something wrong with a people and culture that was so unlike the typical American culture.

Students had a variety of vocations and professions after leaving the Carlisle School, some of which were, band leaders, farmers, tailors, teachers, printers, dentists,

blacksmiths, lawyers, shoemakers, carpenters, doctors and, West Point Cadet. "All of these young men, a few years previous, had been potential enemies of the state" (Toussey, 1939).

The purpose of the Indian School Movement was to totally assimilate the Indian into Anglo-American culture. The belief in Manifest Destiny helped bring about the Indian School Movement. The Movement began soon after the Civil War ended, when the prominent belief in the U.S. and in U.S. political institutions was the superiority of the Anglo-American race and culture. Emphasis at the school was placed on quick acculturation of the Indian students. By total immersion in Anglo-American culture and education, students learned the details about living and working amongst whites, the laws, politics, customs and Christian religion. This followed the belief of Nationalism in that what was in the best interest of the Nation was best for those affected.

Totalitarian Ideology "...can be defined as a system...that seeks complete or total control over all aspects of life – social, cultural, economic, and educational." (Gutek, 245). Certainly, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School attempted to control all of those aspects of the students' lives. Through the separation from their own culture and immersion in the Anglo-American culture, Indian students came to believe in the superiority of the Anglo-American culture and became ashamed of their own. The students were, "...told that the Indian ways were bad. The books told how bad the Indians had been to the white men – burning their towns and killing their women and children. I had seen white men do that to Indians. We all wore white man's clothes and ate white man's food and went to white man's churches and spoke white man's talk. And so after a while, we also began to say Indians were bad. We laughed at our own

people and their blankets and cooking pots and sacred societies and dances" (Odyssey, 2002). Students were systematically turned against their own ancestry and culture.

Pratt followed many concepts, that today would be classified as totalitarianism. As seen in the paragraph above, he used psychological manipulation to influence the students, through what was taught at the Carlisle Indian Industrial School and by whom, loyalty to the United States was built and students were indoctrinated into Anglo-American beliefs. Students began to internalize the racism that they were taught through books and teachings, that whites were culturally superior.

In addition, in a totalitarian environment, "...young are shaped in [a] prepared and controlled environment" (Gutek, 246). The boarding school environment, which was far from the student's home and Tribal culture, controlled the entire life of the student; what they studied, ate, spoke, read and did. In addition, students were recruited at young ages, when they were most susceptible to the influence of their teachers.

Propaganda, another tool of totalitarianism, was used liberally to promote the Carlisle Indian Industrial School. The student newspaper contained glowing accounts of the school, student activities and accomplishments. The papers often contained student-authored articles and editorials, in which the students spoke highly of the Carlisle experience, however, it is believed that Pratt had to grant approval of the content of the student newspaper (Witmer, 1993). This aligns with beliefs of Totalitarianism where "...expression of alternate or divergent viewpoints is prohibited..." (Gutek, 246). The student newspaper would also be an example of the

use of media to further the totalitarian ideology. Since the paper was sent to subscribers all over the United States, it spread the propaganda that the Carlisle Indian Industrial School was fulfilling its mission to civilize the 'savage' Indian.

And lastly, totalitarianism is seen in the, "Ritualized ... behavior codes..." (Gutek, 246). Students were outfitted in uniforms, military uniforms for the males and Victorian style uniforms for the females. In addition, the day was regimented with formations, inspections, marches and drills. Students were expected to follow the rules of the school and were punished for transgressions.

Conclusion

During the years in which the Carlisle Indian Industrial School operated, while Anglo-Americans were living in a free society, Native Americans were being told how and where they had to live and how their children should be raised. Pratt strove to "Kill the Indian, save the man" by having the students deny their Indian culture, heritage and beliefs and totally assimilate into Anglo-American culture. Pratt believed that the goal of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School, to assimilate and rehabilitate the Native American students was successful. However, in retrospect the goal of the U.S. Government to eradicate the Native American culture failed miserably.

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